

Message Text

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ACTION AF-04

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2093

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 KINSHASA 1914/1

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR CG US OVIP (SEELYE, TALCOTT)

SUBJ: DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SEELYE CALL ON PRESIDENT MOBUTU

1. SUMMARY: DURING BREAKFAST MEETING WITH PRES MOBUTU, MAR 5, SEELYE DISCUSSED RANGE OF BILATERAL ISSUES INCLUDING ECONOMIC AND SECURITY ASSISTANCE, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND PANAM CONTRACT. SEELYE ALSO REVIEWED CURRENT US EFFORTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICAN AND DELIVERED MESSAGE OF APPRECIATION FROM PRES CARTER FOR MOBUTU'S INTERVENTION WITH AMIN. MOBUTU ASKED THAT SEELYE CARRY BACK TWO MESSAGES TO NEW US ADMINISTRATION: MOBUTU WAS DETERMINED TO IMPLEMENT TOUGH MEASURES TO STABILIZE ZAIRE'S ECONOMY AND, IN DOING SO, WILL NEED CONTINUED US HELP; HE REMAINS READY TO ADVISE AND SUPPORT US IN DEALING WITH AFRICAN PROBLEMS. END SUMMARY.

2. SEELYE AND I FLEW TO MBANDAKA TODAY, MAR 5, TO MEET WITH PRES MOBUTU FOR A BREAKFAST SESSION ON BOARD HIS RIVER BOAT.

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MEETING LASTED ONE AND ONE QUARTER HOURS. ACTING FONMIN LOMBO WAS ALSO PRESENT. MOBUTU WAS IN GOOD FORM AND SEEMED RELAXED.

3. IN SEATING US AT THE BREAKFAST TABLE ON DECK, MOBUTU JOKINGLY SAID HE WOULD KEEP US AWAY FROM THE HOT SUN IN ORDER TO "PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS". HE THEN STARTED OFF THE CONVERSATION BY ASKING SEELYE WHAT GOOD NEWS HE HAD BROUGHT FROM WASHINGTON.

RM SEELYE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR BEING RECEIVED BY THE PRESIDENT, PARTICULARLY AT TIME WHEN PRESIDENT WAS BUSY WITH CONSULTATIONS WITH MEMBERS OF HIS POLITICAL BUREAU. HE REVIEWED HIS TRIP IN AFRICA THUS FAR, OBSERVING THAT USG IS WATCHING DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA CLOSELY IN VIEW OF ETHIOPIAN-SOMALIAN RIVELRIES IN ANTICIPATION OF DJIBOUTI'S INDEPENDENCE. SEELYE SAID HIS NEXT STOP WOULD BE CAMEROON, A COUNTRY WITH WHICH THE US ENJOYS EXCELLENT RELATIONS.

5. SEELYE SAID HE CONSIDERED HIS VISIT TO ZAIARE THE HIGH POINT OF HIS TRIP AND REMARKED THAT IT WOULD BE STATING THE OBVIOUS TO REITERATE THE PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE THE US ATTACHES TO ITS RELATIONS WITH ZAIRE. IN THIS CONNECTION, IF THE PRESIDENT WERE INTERESTED, HE WOULD PROPOSE TO DISCUSS VARIOUS ASPECTS OF OUR RELATIONSHIP. THE PRESIDENT NODDED SUPPORT. SEELYE STARTED BY DELIVERING TO MOBUTU PRES CARTER'S MESSAGE OF APPRECIATION FOR MOBUTU'S INTERVENTION WITH ID AMIN IN OUR BEHALF. MOBUTU READ THE MESSAGE CAREFULLY AND EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION.

6. SEELYE SAID THAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION IN WASHINGTON INTENDS TO CONTINUE ITS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TO ZAIRE AND NOTED THAT WE HAD JUST SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS PROPOSALS FOR ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO ZAIRE FOR FISCAL YEAR 1978. REFERRING TO USEFUL MEETINGS HELD THE DAY BEFORE WITH THE GOVERNOR OF THE CENTRAL BANK AND THE MINISTER OF FINANCE, HE SAID HE WAS IMPRESSED WITH THE PROGRAM THE ZAIRIAN GOVT HAS PROPOSED TO FURTHER STABILIZE ITS ECONOMY. THIS PROGRAM, HE OBSERVED, IS AN ESSENTIAL PRECONDITION TO ELICITING SUBSTANTIAL INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL

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ASSISTANCE TO ZAIRE IN THE YEARS AHEAD.

7. MOBUTU BROKE IN AT THIS POINT TO ASK THAT SEELYE CONVEY TO PRES CARTER AND SECTY VANCE THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE: ZAIRE STILL HAS SERIOUS ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND MOBUTU IS DETERMINED TO TAKE ALL NECESSARY STEPS, HOWEVER TOUGH THEY MAY BE, TO IMPLEMENT NEW STABILIZATION MEASURES AND THEREBY EFFECT THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY. IN DOING SO, ZAIRE WILL NEED ALL THE HELP IT CAN GET AN MUST THEREFORE LOOK TO THE US FOR CONTINUED ASSISTANCE.

8. WITH REGARD TO MILITARY ASSISTANCE, SEELYE NOTED THAT I HAD ALREADY INFORMED THE PRESIDENT OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S INTENTION TO PROVIDE ZAIRE WITH \$30 MILLION IN CREDITS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1978, AN UNDERTAKING WHICH HAD BEEN SUBMITTED FOR CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL. SEELYE REMARKED THAT CONGRESS' INCREASING ROLE IN FOREIGN POLICY REQUIRES MUCH CLOSER CONSULTATION BETWEEN THE EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BRANCHES ON FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS, AND IT WILL THEREFORE BE NECESSARY TOWORK MORE CLOSELY THAN EVER WITH CONGRESS IN UNDERLINING THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR CONTINUING OUR

MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO ZAIRE. HE SAID THAT, AS PART OF THIS EFFORT, I HAD BEEN ASKED TO RETURN TO WASHINGTON IN A COUPLE OF DAYS FOR CONSULTATIONS. MOBUTU STRESSED THE CONTINUING NEED FOR MILITARY AID, REFERRING TO THE HUNDREDS OF TANKS IN NEIGHBORING ANGOLA AND IN CONGO AS WELL. SEELYE NOTED THAT, AS THE PRESIDENT WAS AWARE, WE HAD INCLUDED SOME TANKS IN OUR ASSISTANCE PACKAGE FOR THIS FISCAL YEAR.

9. WITH REGARD TO MILITARY ASSISTANCE, I RECALLED THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER HAD PROMISED TO ENCOURAGE OUR EUROPEAN ALLIES TO EXPLORE WAYS OF PROVIDING MORE HELP TO ZAIRE AND THAT SUBSEQUENTLY, LAST JANUARY, US DEFENSE EXPERTS HAD HELD CONSULTATIONS WITH THE BELGIANS AND THE FRENCH. I SAID THAT THESE DISCUSSIONS HAD PROVED VERY USEFUL IN THE SENSE OF PROMOTING BETTER COORDINATION OF OUR RESPECTIVE EFFORTS AND THAT WE WERE GENERALLY ENCOURAGED BY THE ATTITUDES OF OUR EUROPEAN ALLIES. MOBUTU SAID THAT DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO BRUSSELS THE BELGIAN DEFENSE MINISTER
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HAD MENTIONED THESE CONSULTATIONS TO HIM. MOBUTU ADDED THAT HE

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WAS CONCERNED BY POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN BELGIUM AND THE POSSIBILITY THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE CHANGED.

10. ON THE POLITICAL LEVEL, SEELYE CONTINUED, WASHINGTON CONTINUES TO HAVE HIGH REGARD FOR PRESIDENT MOBUTU AND AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT IN LAGOS WAS AN EXCELLENT FIRST STEP IN ESTABLISHING CLOSE CONTACTS BETWEEN THE NEW ADMINISTRATION AND THE GOZ. SEELYE SAID THAT AMBASSADOR YOUNG HAD MUCH APPRECIATED THE OPPORTUNITY OF MEETING WITH MOBUTU. NOT ONLY DOES THE US ESTEEM THE ROLE THAT PRESIDENT MOBUTU CAN PLAY IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, BUT WE VALUE THE MODERATE AND CONTRUCTIVE ROLE THAT HE HAS PLAYED AND CAN CONTINUE TO PLAY IN AFRICA.

11. SEELYE SAID THERE WERE TWO OTHER MATTERS INVOLVING OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS THAT HE WANTED TO MENTION. FIRST, HE SAID THAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION ATTACHES A GREAT DEAL OF CONFIDENTIAL

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IMPORTANCE TO HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS IN ITS RELATIONS WITH COUNTRIES AROUND THE WORLD. ACCORDINGLY, PROGRAMS OF BILATERAL ASSISTANCE WOULD DEPEND TO A CERTAIN EXTENT ON HOW RECIPIENT GOVERNMENTS PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS. I INTERJECTED TO SAY THAT CONGRESS ALSO IS DEEPLY INTERESTED IN THIS ISSUE AND HAS ASKED THE ADMINISTRATION TO SUBMIT TO IT PUBLIC REPORTS ON THE STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN MANY INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES, INCLUDING ZAIRE, WHERE WE OF COURSE HAVE IMPORTANT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. SEELYE WENT ON TO SAY THAT PRESIDENT MOBUTU SHOULD BE FULLY AWARE OF THIS FACTOR IN OUR FOREIGN POLICY, ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT THINK THAT THIS SHOULD POSE A PROBLEM IN OUR RELATIONS WITH ZAIRE.

12. ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF HUMAN RIGHTS, MOBUTU EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE IN ZAIRE'S SITUATION. HE SAID THE ZAIRIAN PEOPLE WERE ATTACHED TO THEIR LEADER BECAUSE THEY KNEW HE WAS DOING HIS BEST TO LEAD AND DEVELOP THE COUNTRY AND TO IMPROVE THEIR LOT. SO LONG AS THERE WAS THIS ATTACHMENT BY THE PEOPLE THERE SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM REGARDING HUMAN RIGHTS.

13. AS HIS FINAL POINT IN DISCUSSING OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, SEELYE ALLUDED TO THE NEWS WHICH HAD COME OUT DURING HIS STAY IN KINSHASA REGARDING THE ZAIRIAN GOVERNMENT'S DECISION TO DISCONTINUE ITS CONTRACT WITH PANAM TO MANAGE AND OPERATE AIR ZAIRE. HE SAID HE WAS "SURPRISED" AT THIS DECISION SINCE IT SEEMED TO BE IN OUR MUTUAL INTEREST TO EXPAND ALL POSSIBLE AREAS OF AMERICAN-ZAIRIAN RELATIONS.

14. MOBUTU RESPONDED WITH LENGTHY EXPLANATION OF WHY HE FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO RENEW THE PANAM CONTRACT, MAKING ESSENTIALLY

SAME POINTS HE HAD PREVIOUSLY MADE TO ME: I.E., AFTER SIX YEARS PANAM'S EFFORTS HAD ACCOMPLISHED NEXT TO NOTHING; CONTRACT WAS TILTED IN FAVOR OF PANAM'S INTERESTS VIS-A-VIS THOSE OF AIR ZAIRE; CONTRACT WAS TOO EXPENSIVE IN LIGHT OF ZAIRE'S BUDGETARY AND FX CRUNCH, WITH TOO MUCH EVIDENCE OF HIGH-LIVING BY EXPATRIATE EMPLOYEES; THOSE FOREIGNERS STILL NEEDED SHOULD BE HIRED INDIVIDUALLY BY AIR ZAIRE, BUT NOT UNDER CONTRACT WITH ANOTHER

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AIRLINE. MOBUTU SAID HE HAD NOTHING AGAINST THE USG; BUT HE HAD CONCLUDED IT WAS IN ZAIRE'S SOVEREIGN INTEREST TO TERMINATE THE CONTRACT WITH PANAM. SEELYE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IT WAS OF COURSE A DECISION FOR ZAIRE TO MAKE. I SAID I UNDERSTOOD PANAM WOULD START IMMEDIATELY TO REMOVE ITS PERSONNEL AND IN DOING SO WOULD MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO MINIMIZE ANY POSSIBLE DAMAGE OR DISRUPTION TO AIR ZAIRE'S OPERATIONS. MOBUTU INDICATED HE APPRECIATED PANAM'S INTENTION TO TERMINATE ITS SERVICES "CORRECTLY".

15. TURNING TO AREA ISSUES, SEELYE BROUGHT THE PRESIDENT UP TO DATE CONCERNING OUR APPROACH TO RESOLUTION OF THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN PROBLEMS. INTER ALIA, HE MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

(A) THE NEW ADMINISTRATION HAS PUBLICLY INDICATED ITS DETERMINATION THAT THE US CONTINUE TO PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN FACILITATING NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENTS;

(B) THE BRITISH "FORMULA" FOR ASSUMING AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE TRANSITION GOVERNMENT STILL SEEMS TO PROVIDE A BASIS FOR BRINGING THE PARTIES TOGETHER;

(C) SECRETARY VANCE LAST MONTH ISSUED AN UNEQUIVOCAL STATEMENT SIGNALING THE IAN SMITH GOVERNMENT THAT THE US UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD COME TO RHODESIA'S ASSISTANCE IF RHODESIA DID NOT COOPERATE IN EFFORTS TO MOVE RAPIDLY TO INDEPENDENCE AND MAJORITY RULE;

(D) THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS ALSO ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO MARSHAL ITS RESOURCES IN AN EFFORT TO REPEAL THE BYRD AMENDMENT;

(E) CONSULTATIONS WITH THE BRITISH LAST WEEK WERE DESIGNED TO REGENERATE THE NEGOTIATING MOMENTUM AND OUR APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM IS STILL BASED ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE ALTERNATIVE OF PROTRACTED BLOODY WARFARE IS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE.

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16. WITH REGARD TO NAMIBIA, SEELYE SAID THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO MOVEMENT IN THE LAST FEW MONTHS BUT THE US CONTINUES TO BELIEVE SOUTH AFRICA IS PREPARED TO MAKE SOME BASIC CONCESSIONS WHICH, IF MET BY SOME FLEXIBILITY ON THE PART OF SWAPO, COULD PRODUCE RESULTS. SEELYE STRESSED THAT THE FACT WE ARE WORKING WITH SOUTH AFRICA IN RESOLVING PROBLEMS OF RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA SHOULD IN NO WAY BE MISINTERPRETED AS US SUPPORT FOR APARTHEID. ON THE CONTRARY, OUR POLICY CONTINUES TO BE BASED ON STRONG OPPOSITION TO APARTHEID AND THE NEW ADMINISTRATION HAS ALREADY EXPRESSED STRONG VIEWS IN THIS REGARD. AT THE SAME TIME, US POLICY IS BASED ON THE PREMISE THAT TOP PRIORITY SHOULD BE GIVEN TO RESOLVING THE PRESSING ISSUES OF RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA.

17. MOBUTU INTERJECTED THAT HE FULLY AGREED WITH THIS SET OF PRIORITIES AND NOTED BASIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PROBLEMS OF RHODESIA AND SOUTH AFRICA. THE WHITES IN RHODESIA WERE CLEARLY A COLONIALIST MINORITY AND THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE COUNTRY
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SHOULD MOVE QUICKLY TO RULE BY THE BLACK MAJORITY. IN SOUTH AFRICA, ON THE OTHER HAND, THE WHITES HAD JUST AS MUCH OF A CLAIM TO STAYING THERE AS THE BLACKS. THE INSTITUTION OF APARTHEID WAS THE PROBLEM, AND EFFORTS SHOULD THEREFORE BE DIRECTED TOWARD CHANGING IT. ON RHODESIA, MOBUTU NOTED THAT ZAIRE OPPOSED EXCLUSION OF ANY OF MAJOR ZIMBABWE NATIONALIST GROUPS AND HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN CONVINCING THE OAU NOT TO ENDORSE SOLELY THE PATRIOTIC FRONT.

18. ON ANGOLA, SEELYE RECALLED THAT SECRETARY VANCE ANNOUNCED SOME WEEKS AGO THAT THE US IS PREPARED TO CONSIDER NORMALIZING

RELATIONS WITH THAT COUNTRY, BUT, FRANKLY, WE DO NOT EXPECT THIS TO BE AN EASY PROCESS. WE ARE APPROACHING THIS MATTER WITH GREAT CARE. IN RESPONSE TO SEELYE'S QUERY AS TO MOBUTU'S VIEWS ON THE INTERNAL SITUATION IN ANGOLA, MOBUTU SAID IT IS EVIDENT THE MPLA REGIME IS SPLIT ESSENTIALLY BETWEEN THOSE FAVORING THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS AND THOSE OPPOSING THEM. IN ANY CASE, THE ANGOLZNS THEMSELVES ARE NOT IN CONTROL OF THEIR OWN AFFAIRS. HE THOUGHT LARA IS THE MAN TO WATCH AS BEING POTENTIALLY ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL MEMBERS OF THE REGIME.

19. I RAISED THE QUESTION OF ZAIRE'S RELATIONS WITH ANGOLA, NOTING THAT LUANDA SEEMS FINALLY TO HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED ZAIRE'S FORMAL RECOGNITION OF THE PRA. MOBUTU ATTRIBUTED THIS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT TO HIS OWN REBUTTAL OF LUANDA'S CHARGES THAT FORCES FROM ZAIRE HAD ATTACKED ACROSS THE BORDER, NOTING ALSO THAT IN HIS REBUTTAL HE HAD CALLED NETO'S BLUFF BY ENDORSING NETO'S APPEAL FOR AN OAU INVESTIGATION. MOBUTU EXPRESSED DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT ANGOLA'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ZAIRE'S RECOGNITION MEANT THAT ANGOLA WOULD SOON BE WILLING TO MOVE SERIOUSLY TOWARD IMPROVING RELATIONS.

20 MOBUTU SAID THAT DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO NIGERIA PRESIDENT OBASANJO HAD OFFERED TO HELP IN NORMALIZING ZAIRIAN-ANGOLAN RELATIONS BY TALKING TO NETO. MOBUTU HAD AGREED AND CONFIDENTIAL

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THE NIGERIANS DID IN FACT ELICIT ASSURANCES THAT THE PRA WISHED TO IMPROVE RELATIONS. HOWEVER, OBSANJO HAD NOT BEEN AWARE OF ALL THE CHARGES NETO WAS AT THE SAME TIME MAKING PUBLICLY AGAINST ZAIRE, AND NIGERIA'S EFFORTS HAD NOT ACCOMPLISHED MUCH. SEELYE SAID HE WAS INTERESTED IN THE PRESIDENT'S ALLUSION TO BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN ZAIRE AND HIGERIA AND WONDERED IF IT WOULD BE CORRECT TO SAY THAT THESE RELATIONS ARE NOW GOOD. MOBUTU REPLIED IN THE AFFIRMATIVE.

21. MOBUTU CLOSED THE CONVERSATION BY ASKING SEELYE TO CONVEY ANOTHER MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT CARTER: WHILE ZAIRE MAY NOT BE THE PREDOMINANT LEADER IN AFRICA, IT HAS THE CAPABILITY OF EXERTING STRONG INFLUENCE AND -- JUST AS HE HELPED THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION TO AVOID OR RESOLVE CERTAIN PROBLEMS IN ITS RELATIONS WITH AFRICA -- SO MOBUTU REMAINS READY TO CONTINUE TO ADVISE AND SUPPORT THE USG AS IT PURSUES ITS AFRICAN POLICIES. SEELYE THANKED THE PRESIDENT AND SAID HE WOULD CONVEY THIS ASSURANCE OF CONTINUED COOPERATION TO THE NEW ADMINISTRATION.

2. COMMENT: MOBUTU WAS OBVIOUSLY PLEASED TO HAVE THIS CHANCE TO TALK TO SEELYE, THE SECOND HIGH-RANKING OFFICIAL TO COME OUT FROM WASHINGTON SINCE THE NEW ADMINISTRATION TOOK OFFICE. WITHOUT RESORTING TO THE HARD SELL, MOBUTU NEVERTHELESS MADE

HIS MESSAGE CLEAR: HE NEEDS AND WANTS OUR CONTINUED ECONOMIC AND
MILITARY ASSISTANCE, AND IS AT THE SAME TIME READY TO CONTINUE
COOPERATING WITH US ON A SPECTRUM OF ISSUES WHERE US INTERESTS
ARE INVOLVED. CERTAINLY SUCH IS THE CASE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA,
WHERE -- ALTHOUGH HIS CAPACITY TO INFLUENCE EVENTS IS CLEARLY
LIMITED -- MOBUTU'S VIEWS AND OBJECTIVES REMAIN GENERALLY IN
LINE WITH OURS AND WHERE HE IS WILLING TO WORK AT LEAST
PRIVATELY WITH OTHER AFRICANS IN SUPPORT OF MODERATE SOLUTIONS.
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